CONFIDENTIAL FYI ONLY 6/22/72, 11:45 p.m.

Sylvia Meagher called me this evening to tell me that Burke Marshall had granted Cyril Wecht access to the autopsy pix and X-rays. She said Wecht had approval in wirting from Rhoads and could set his own date. First he wants to consult with me and possibly others (Gary, Jim Lesar and Bob Smith). Sylvia wants to know could I come up to NY next friday (6/30) to meet with her and Wecht. I say I could. I had already told her in letter that if Wecht got access, I would help brief him. (This was several months ago, when I also expressed to her my disagreement that he should get access). She asks about the others and I said they should not be there. She admitted Gary was too far away--out of the question. I said Jerry had no business there--she agreed. I said no to Smith because of his involvement with the committee, and no to LEsar because he doesn't know enough. She said she agreed and would tell Wecht this.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Sylvia asked what about Harold, she said Wecht wanted to know also. I said I didn't know but that I should call him right away. She said she would but she expressed reservations, saying she had a fear to even discuss this with Harold. I told her I wanted to be the first to tell him anyway--I had personal reasons, for I was deeply troubled and unsure. We left it that I would call Harold and call her back.

After some trouble with phone lines, I got through to Harold and told him. He said his position had not changed, that he would have nothing to do with this and only hoped the least bad would come of it. He said that my decision must be my own, and that I would have to live with it. If I involved myself with these people and the thing backfired, then it would be partly my responsibility. The first thing Harold said when I told him I was to go to NY to brief Wecht was "Don't you dare use any of my material." I told him there were things I would not consider using, but some I was not sure. He said I'd have to decide for myself what was my work and what was his, where we overlap. To my thinking, although I did not get the chance to spell this out to him, virtually everything in PM is his, esp. in the last part. But the gross discrepancies between the Panel Report and the autopsy testimony cannot be overlooked. Wecht <u>has</u> to be alerted to the neck fragments, the head wound, etc.

Harold feared the most horrible things coming from this. He said why ~~AAG~~ did Marshall decide <u>now</u>? Lookk at the bad position of the Repubs, with the McGovern successes and the recent raid, look at the trouble the FBI is in, etc. I agreed with Harold that Marshall's decision must be political. I still agree with Harold that severe political harm could result from this, although I am less positive than he (and here I may misrepresent him) that this harm <u>will</u> occur. I <u>do</u> feel that there is no good that can come from Wecht's exam, and that there is really nothing it can tell us that we do not know.

But I told Harold that despite these reservations, plus whatever reservations I might have about the motives and the qualifications of those involved, I did feel I had a responsibility to brief Wecht as best I could so that his exam and his subsequent statements are more responsible than they might be otherwise. I have more fear of him going in there without talking to <u>anyone</u> who can responsibly brief him than if he has <u>some</u> background and some effort is made to at least steer him away from far-out, irresponsible things. To this Harold said this decision must be my own.

He told me that there is no telling what he might do if this hurts his work in any way. He was obviously very serious about this, and very affected. He said, after I told him what had transpired with the death certificate, that he would

file a suit if the death certificate were even mentioned, whether or not he had a chance of winning. He said he would fight these people to the end of his life if necessary, weild whatever power he could. He was extremely taken back, as I expected he would be, about the passing of the death certif. by Gary and Jerry, he said he will have to live "like a hermit" (as Gary had advised him long ago) and that what Jerry did was unforgivable and that the next time I spoke to him to tell him never to call Harold again.

I told Harold that I understood as best I could how he felt, that it affected me deeply too when Sylvia told me, and that I did not blame him for feeling that way. I believe I said, or at least I know I felt, that he trusted too many people. He said this too.

We agreed there was nothing more to be said. He said I had to consider the people I was dealing with, and make my own decision. Only I could decide what was right for me to do, he stressed. I agreed with him, and again told him my dilemma, of whether I should totally disassociate myself from the whole thing with Wecht or if I should help him as best I can. I told Harold that it struck me, not having the same (or as Harold put it better, all the same) interests as he, that I should do whatever I could in the hopes of lessening the damage Wecht could do. Harold would not decide for me, and I did not want him to. There was a feeling I sensed that he would prefer I chose to diassociate myself. But he explicitly left the choice up to my own sense af right and wrong.

After my talk with Harold, I did not know what to tell Sylvia, for I was no longer sure if I'd go to NY. I pondered and pondered (I had told Harold I would think about it very much). I read over the file I kept concerning Harold's position on Wecht getting access pre-Lattimer. I spoke to my father just to air my inner thoughts. After more than an hour at this, Sylvia called back.

I told her I was sorry for not calling back, but that I was wrestling with my conscience over what to do. I told her I still had serious misgivings over Wecht seeing this stuff, that I still feared real political consequences, and I actually did not know if I should even brief Cyril. She was quite taken back, although she generally maintained her calm, usually building up into searing and violent oratories. She began by saying that there had been quite a change in me betwwen the first call and now, after I spoke to Harold. She said she thought Harold's fears were utterly unfounded and unrealistic and that they cloaked, unconsciously, Harold's desire to protect his work and to be the person who "broke the case." She said she respects Harold's work no end but doesn't give a damn about his interests. She said her principle goal is Oswald and the truth, this is all she has worked for, and she can't make Harold her prime interest. She doesn't care if Wecht's opportunity to "let the truth out" hurts Harold. I told her a number of things. (Let me make it clear that I could not possibly give a blow by blow account of this long and complex conversation. Sylvia made the above points through a series of arguments. These are some of the points I made, not all at once).

First I told her I thought there was really nothing Cyril's exam could accomplish in terms of adding new facts or establishing truth. We knew enough to know all the truths we will probably ever know, and we knew that the WR is WRONG. What difference does it make at this point if the public or the press think so too, that will not change things and will not change the cover-up or make the guilty innocent. I told her that the "truth" Wecht lets out will give all the guilty ones the opportunity to let themselves off the hook by blaming the Kennedies and wouldn't this result in a greater prostitution of the truth. She argued that if the Kennedies didn't suppress this stuff from the WC, it didn't matter what these people say. ANyway, the WC had the power of subpoena so it doesn't matter one way or the other what the Kennedies desired. I said that the press did not know or at least would not admit this, and that it would

protect the lies of the gov't as it always had done. She said this should not stop us, and that we might as well have never done anything if we were worried the gov't would resprt to lies and dirty play to counter us. I told her this was different because this was the only evidence they could claim was suppressed by someone else and she said she still rejected the whole argument. She said it is merely a shakey rationalization of what could happen, and she said it is no better than the rationalizations of the WC that it lied to protect the national interest, prevent foreign war, etc.

She said that Wecht had to be prepared before and after he saw the stuff to make a statement or to act in anticipation of the many things the gov't could pull. Like to say that there was no reason for the WC not to have this meterial because it could have subpoenaed it.

At one point I gave her an example of the kind of thing Wecht has to do when he gets in. I prefaced this by saying I thought it was more important for him to address the integrity and legitimacy of what he was shown than its factual content. Integrity of the evidence, I told her, included its completeness. When they show Wecht X-rays which do not include lower extremeties, he should point to the record that Humes swore such X-rays were taken, demand to see them and if they are not there, demand an accounting of them. Then he must make it clear that this stuff cannot be authenticated and that whatever he sees on what he is shown is academic or at least limited because he cannot vouch for the legitimacy of the evidence. I said that is one approach he must take. Sylvia was not against it, but she said Cyril will not know this If I did not speak to him.

I told her Harold wanted no part of this and had not changed his position. But I told her to tell Cyril that I felt he shoudd call Harold even so. She said she would tell Cyril this.

Then Sylvia suggested something which appealed to me. She said that she and I both should demand of Cyril that he consult us after his exam and before he makes a public statement, so that we may de-brief him and make sure he plans to say or write nothing irresponsible. I liked that Idea and told Sylvia that I would make that a condition of my talking to Wecht in the first place, that he clear with me anything he is to say or write and that he tell me everything about what he saw. Sylvia said this was a very reasonable demand.

I also told her that I would not consent to talk to Wecht unless it was in her company alone, excluding Jerry, Smith or Lesar. She agreed. I told her I didn't know if this would be acceptable to Wecht, but I would consider the further restriction that if he is to talk to me, he hay talk to no one else but Harold or Dick (or her) at any time. Specifically, he may not seek advice from Smith or Lesar or Gary.

When Sylvia saw that I still had misgivings, which I freely admitted, and that if I consulted Wecht it would be only out of my belief that I could help avert some damage, she belabored the point of Harold and his "self-interest." She went off onto long tirades. I told her that it was Harold's position that he was not suppressin what he had, that he made numerous offers to her and Cyril to come see what he had, and that he gave Cyril opportunities to help him do something about this. She said she could not speak for Cyril, but sh could not bear going down to Harold's, that she cannot get along with Harold, and that being with him had upset her on numerous occasions. She claimed to suffer an utter sense of frustration around him, esp. when there is a difference between the two. She continually stressed her "respect" for Harold's work but said that Harold puts himself above the truth, and she cannot work that way. I told her that the issue, what affected me now was Wecht. Why hadn't he taken up Harold's offers if he contemplated what he is doing now. She asked me if

I'd seen the vile and abusive letters Harold had written Cyril and asked if any rational person could be expected to answer them. I told I'd seen some but asked if she saw what preceded them, Harold's numerous offers. She said no, but perhaps Cyril's dealings with Harold at the 1969 trial at Halleck's court turned him off. I told her that it was Harold who gave Cyril the panel report, Cyril read it and didn't understand it, and Harold had to explain it to him. Sylvia very freely admitted that she knew how Cyril missed everything in the report. She said that Wecht's testimony at the hearing was all Harold's work, but surely I didn't expect Wecht to give Harold credit then on the stand. I told her I had a different moral conception than she did. She said that she too missed everything in the panel report until she saw Harold's work because it came out at her busiest time of year and she only skimmed it. I said this only underscored Harold's claim to credit, and she said that Harold made it impossible for anyone to credit XXX by making it so humiliating for them to doso; she has gotten so much credit, she feels, becauxex she has not begged for it. I said that regardless of the personal issue, there was a moral issue and that Harold deserved credit.

Here she said something of great importance. She said that Harold had better not expect any credit for the death certificate, because "Cyril and I didn't even get it from Harold; we got it from Jerry." She hadn't said before that Jerry sent a copy to Cyril. But she went on to say that it was a public paper and Harold had no exclusive right to it. I said he had a copyright on his interpretation of it, and she said big deal, no one even knows his interpretation of it. I told her there was still an ethical XXXXXXX issue because of all the work and aacrafice Harold went through to get this, and everything else. I said he wasn't about to go send it to people who don't do any work, don't help him and then don't give him credit for what he has produced. She was unmoved. She said she had tried to help Harold, and XXX she made excuses for Cyril saying he has taken great professional risks in what he has done. She continued in long tirades against Harold, questioning even his sanity, saying no one is obligated to support him, and that she was dead sure nothing breaking the case could come from him because "his name is mud, among the public, at every newspaper, magazine, TV studio, everywhere. He is his own worst enemy. He has personally killed any chance of success he had; he is unconsciously bent on self destruction." There was no arguing with her.

(It just came to me that early in our second conversation I told her if I spoke to Wecht I would use none of Harold's material. She asked even if it was essential to Wecht's exam? I told her I had a moral obligation not to use Harold's stuff, and that was that.)

She told me that several times she has been wrong in her judgements of people, and that Harold had warned her but she did not listen because she had to learn for herself, and she could not take actions simply because Harold Weisberg felt a certain way. She named Salandria, Epstein and Lifton as examples. But she said that Harold has been dead wrong too, about Garrison, "although he is now passing around an tailored version of his relationship with Garrison." She said that Harold had forcefully argued in defense of Garrison to her, in writing, on the phone, and once in person in the UN cafeteria so much to her rage and frustration that she was in tears. She said Harold always told her that she didn't know all of what was in Garrison's files, and he had more than he was making public. She said he would not listen to her, and that when he began getting pissed at Garrison "for the wrong reasons", i.e., because he was not giving Harold credit, Harold began to beg off. I told her my understanding was that Harold did not support the case against Shaw but that he wanted to help the incompetants with the Dallas aspects of the case. She said that was "an antiseptic version" of the real story.

She said it was too late to call Cyril (about 11pm) and she wanted to know what she should tell him tomorrow. I said thst I felt I had a moral obligation to

speak with Cyril, but that it must be understood I had great reservations and misgivings and that I merely wanted to avert whatever damage I could. I said there were still the conditions I wanted imposed. She said she would outline all this to him and give him my number and tell him to call me. I told her that she must appreciate my position, esp. my position with Harold. I said I had an obviously greater interest in Harold's interests than she, and that my affection for Harold was something I had to consider when I contemplated how I could face myself if I made the wrong decision. She repeated again that Harold had been wrong in the past and could be wrong now, and that I had to consider if he was not merely throwing a "political smokescreen"--even unconsciously--over his real desire to protect his work at the expense of truth. I told her that as an independent person I of course must consider that Harold has personal interests at stake, but that I was still persuaded by his analysis, and I was entirely capable of independent thought and judgement. I told her that I had to resist her own passions as well, and she stated that she did not want to make up my mind for me, that it was my own decision to make.

So, we left it at that. I expect Wecht will call me tomorrow.

I cannot say that at this point I do not have misgivings: I have several. I especially fear that this thing may backfire, and I fear just as much that Harold will be severely hurt. It would be extremely difficult for me to live with either thing. At the same time I realize that if I do not speak with Wecht, there is no other person for him to go to to get responsible, informed advice other than Harold, from whom I would think he can expect little. I make no claims to correct judgement or complete knowledge, or even the ability to correct Cyril's many deficiencies. But I think it would be harder for me to live with myself if I refused to help Cyril now, whatever my opinion of him or his motives. This, I am quite aware, is a decision which makes a moral compromise. To me, any way I decide must make a compromise. I do not think I will be "pure" by refusing to have anything to do with this operation even though I am against it, for I will be denying Cyril the help he <u>needs</u> if he is to do anything responsible, whatever the consequences. I realize that by helping him I am in a sense "going to bed" with those who I oppose in certain contexts.

Right now, it seems of crucial importance that Wecht agree not to make a public statement or even give press interviews until he has been de-briefed. This especially could avert his doing the irresponsible.

It is a risk, I know. But I cannot stop him from going in. I think I must make the effort to mollify whatever damage he can do, in the ways that I can.

1:35 a.m.

Howard Roffman